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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, conducted at Mississippi State University-Meridian Campus, examined the journal of a student who was given directions to reflect on her student teaching experiences in prescribed areas and ways, and the journals of two students who were not given any directions concerning the content of their journals. The directed student was asked to record specific reflections on teaching methods, self-as-teacher, discipline, school-wide policies, and the relationship of teacher preparatory coursework to actual practice. Examination of the contents of the student teachers' journals revealed strong similarities despite the fact that they had received different instructions. The directed student did not exhibit greater depth or breadth of reflection but did report a greater sense of success than the other student teachers reported. The general commentary centered on their perception that theoretical coursework did not prepare them for the reality of the recordkeeping and classroom organization that were required. Comments on discipline also surfaced as a distinct pattern. The paper recommends that student teachers be more thoroughly taught observational skills and the necessity of thinking critically about what is observed. (JDD)

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Student Teacher Journals: Reflective and Nonreflective

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Presented at the annual meeting of the

Mid South Educational Research Association

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the journal of a student who was given directions to reflect on her student teaching experiences in prescribed areas and ways and the journals of two students who were not given any directions concerning the content of their journals. Prior to examination of the journals, a list of expectations was generated concerning the journal content. The research question posed was: "Does a student teacher who reflects on experiences in practice teaching appear to express more success than student teachers who practice nondirected reflective thinking?" Possible implications of the study are: the need for additional instruction on reflective thinking and addiditonal preparation of student teachers to think critically about their experiences prior to and after actual classroom teaching.

Introduction

Interest in reflection as a means of integrating knowledge gained in teacher education courses with the actual practices of preservice teachers in their student-teaching experiences has been considered frequently in the past 10 years. This renewed interest in reflective inquiry prompted a qualitative research project. During the Spring semester of 1993, Mississippi State University-Meridian Campus students were engaged in student teaching at a large number of schools in approximately 8 counties. In an effort to determine day-by-day events in their experiences, these student teachers were asked to keep journals as a record of their thoughts during their observation and teaching activities. Students were requested to be more reflective about their experiences; however, one student was given explicit instructions concerning applying reflective inquiry methods to her experiences. She was asked specifically to analyze in her journal: methods of teaching, discipline, self-as-teacher, school-wide policies, and the relationship between her preparatory coursework and the actual events of the classroom. Two other students'journals were selected for comparison; these students received no further specific information about reflective inquiry. The results of the

examination of these journals provide the text of the research.

Review of the Literature

Rationale

Since the 1980's, a number of researchers have emphasized the importance of the concept of "reflection" (Schon, 1983, 1987; Zeichner, 1986; Tom, 1985). Much of the interest in reflection centers around this concept as a part of preservice teacher education programs (Grimmett, 1988). Various approaches to reflection advocate the use of particular strategies; others advocate the use of a strategy, such as journal writing, but specify no aspects of the reflective process. A limited number of advocates detail the steps of the reflection process and the instructional processes to be used (Zeichner, 1986). According to Tom (1985), there is little shared meaning of the terms inquiry and reflection among people who write about these concepts. There is little agreement on the content of reflective inquiry or the contexts which foster such practice in teacher education.

To investigate the return of the phenomenon of reflective inquiry, one might turn to the influence of John Dewey (1933) who defined it in this way: "The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a

situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious" (pp. 100-101). Reflection begins with a question, observations made by oneself or others and perplexity. Hypotheses are tested mentally and then by overt action. The reflective process prevents one from jumping to conclusions or failing to evaluate ideas (Dewey, 1933). Furthermore, arriving at an inference suggests predictions based upon past experiences, upon looking backward as well as ahead. As the process moves toward resolution of the problem, the mind is stretched to new capacities (Dewey, 1933).

Schon (1983) adapted Dewey's articulation of the nature of reflection to his theory of "reflective practice" (p.21). Schon held that practitioners involve themselves with problematic situations in a form of conversation which brings past experiences to bear on the current situation. By framing a conversational exchange with the situation, the practitioner develops new understandings and moves into a new cycle of reflection. Schon (1983, 1987) labeled this as reflection-in-action; he included reflection as an integral part of professional knowledge. Applied to education, Schon (1983, 1987) was concerned with the pursuit of

meaning of experience that perplexed or puzzled. Shulman (1987) described this as the "wisdom of practice."

Grimmett (1988) provided one basis for the present research by defining reflection as "thoughtfulness that leads to conscious, deliberate moves, usually taken to 'apply' research findings or educational theory in practice" (p. 12). Further, Grimmett (1988) stated: "It is a view of knowledge with which one could expect the knower to reflect in order to direct or control practice. Another basis for this research was the conception of reflection as a means of reconstructing experiences and identification of new means or directions of action. In this view of reflection, Grimmett (1988) stated that the potential outcomes of this reconstruction was:

1. new understandings of action situations,
2. new understandings of self-as-teacher or the cultural milieu of teaching, or, following a critical-theoretical tradition,
3. new understanding of taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching (p.12).

Grimmett (1988) viewed reflection on action situations as a means for the practitioner to appreciate or apprehend the practice situations in light of

clarifying questions and reconsidered assumptions. He viewed the self-as-teacher category as a means of reconstruction of experience whereby the teacher structured and restructured his or her personal, practical knowledge. The category of taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching encouraged the teachers to emancipate themselves from social, political, and cultural distortions that frustrate efforts to teach.

According to Ross (1986), reflective writing is an important way for preservice teachers to practice the skills of critical analysis and reasoning; also, this writing provides the education faculty with a means of challenging students to reflect. The most common form of reflective writing is the journal (Copeland, 1986; Zeichner, 1986). Freiberg & Waxman (cited in Clift, Houston & Pugach, eds., 1990) cite journal writing as a part of the reflection inquiry teacher education program at the University of Houston. This program required preservice teachers to keep a daily or regular journal to record experiences and questions about their student teaching activities. A number of studies have found journals to be a valuable way to help preservice teachers progress through the stages of cognitive development and become more reflective (Bolin, 1988; Garman, 1982, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Keeping a

journal promotes clearer understanding of concerns and problems encountered and provides prospective teachers with a way to development systematic reflection on their accomplishments in classroom and work contexts and their personal development (Freiberg & Waxman, 1990). Wildman & others (cited in Clift, Houston & Pugach, eds, 1990) formulated concluding statements to encourage and facilitate reflective practice:

1. Systematic reflection is a learned activity. Our experience suggests that any effort to promote reflective practice will benefit from a carefully designed set of experiences (tasks) that help teacher develop
   (a) a sensitivity to their ways of looking at and talking about teaching,
   (b) a positive attitude toward inquiry, and
   (c) a self-analytic approach to teaching.
2. Reflection occurs within natural contexts that we need to better understand. . . .
3. Teachers seem to reflect on their teaching together when circumstances such as proximity, common problems,

shared theories about teaching, or social compatibility cause a bonding to develop between them. Understanding how such relationships develop might be an important factor in facilitating reflection more broadly in schools.

4. The development of cases showing the explicit "moves" that teachers make during episodes of reflective thinking has been an important focus of our recent work. In the abstract, reflection is a difficult concept to talk about and reveal to teachers and administrators. More attention should be given to the development of a literature from which teachers can draw detailed examples of reflective thinking.

5. Probably the least surprising observation we could make is that schools are difficult environments for reflective thinking. Time, compatible colleagues, a conducive climate, and explicit administrative support are just some of the conditions that would figure into a redesign of the workplace to make systematic reflection a more likely event among teachers.

6. Finally, reflection can be an important tool in teachers' growth. We might even argue that growth is unlikely without systematic reflection. As we continue to examine teacher learning, it will be useful to specify further how reflection fits into a more general model of professional learning (pp. 160-161).

Reflective Studies

Mims (1993) reported on a study designed to enhance teachers' skills in reflection. In this study, journals revealed the concerns of teachers during a 9 month period. One item that was reported by the protegees was that they were hesitant to talk with their mentors because of the differences between age and experience.

Valli (1990) noted that teacher educators are concerned about meeting new standards of accreditation . She identified two program concepts--technical and reflective--which are prevalent in current literature. The technical approach is "equated with the teachers' ability to demonstrate prescribed skills and behavior" (p. 3). The reflective concept focuses on thinking about behavior and the context within which it occurs. Reflective teachers "would make conscious judgments and act

upon a situation in a manner consistent with craft, research, political, or ethical knowledge. Reflective teachers could alter their teaching context to a degree, as well as their own behavior to accomplish a desired end" (p. 3). Valli (1990) concludes that we need a community context in which reflection is fostered and that professional knowledge be presented in a way which supports critical reflection on school practices. Valli (1990) further concludes that the restriction of reflective inquiry to technical questions seriously distorts the nature of the practice. To enhance teacher education programs, Valli (1989) advanced the results of another study, a deliberative approach to reflective teaching. Her findings indicated "that with structured activities throughout their professional preparation and frequent supervision, students increase their awareness of the complex classroom environment, see the relatedness of seemingly isolated classroom phenomena, start to own teaching problems rather than displacing them on students, and begin to resist the pull toward a custodial, authoritarian teaching style" (pp. 21-33).

Bednar (1991) reported on her study of how reflective inquiry could be used or promote understanding about reading. She compared 3 groups of preservice teachers. "For this study, reflective inquiry was

operationalized as the active on-going self-questioning or analyzing of one's level of understanding and comfort with specific reading related concepts. This view of reflective inquiry was directly introduced, modeled and reinforced" (p. 4). The students wrote a series of reflection writings during the semester of instruction. A list of thematic statements about reading was obtained by reading the reflection writings 3 times. Then, the writings were read for the presence of specific thematic statements. A difference was found between the responses toward reading of the elementary education students and the secondary education students. Secondary education students were more able to reflect and critique perceived strengths and weaknesses in the use of a reading instruction technique.

Lee (1992) reported on her study of teachers whose classes were involved in portfolio preparation. She collected self report data before and after the project. Model C teachers were more interested in having students reflect. Lee found that one teacher was more generally oriented toward reflection upon her teaching than the others. In regard to preservice teaching, this study implies that the beliefs and intentions of teachers influence how they interpret their role in the classroom and how

they implement the curriculum.

Volkman and others(1992) completed a study of field-based reflective practice among preservice teachers. The authors concluded that students who practiced reflective inquiry became better reflectors and reported a higher rating of efficacy.

Barnett and Bayne (1992) completed a pilot project with Canadian interns which involved reflective journal writing. They focused on descriptive, analytical, and affective levels of journal writing. The interns received specific instruction concerning their writing activities. They were instructed to write once per week on their teaching experiences. At the Descriptive Level, they were asked to write about planning, teaching, and evaluation. At the Analytical Level, they were asked tc consider the effectiveness of their teaching and other approaches available to them, as well as the implication of decision-making. At the Affective Level they were asked to reflect on themselves and their feelings about teaching and the feelings of their students. The journal writings were used in the post-evaluation conferences with the students.

In a study of how student and novice teachers view themselves, Williams (1992) found that student teachers with naturalistic inquiry skills

understand their students better, are more willing to model the learning process, are more willing to change in response to their students' needs, and are involved in research that benefits teachers and teacher education. This naturalistic, or ethnographic study, was conducted over a year-long internship and utilized field notes and journal entries to examine all aspects of the student teachers' experiences. The earlier entries indicated confusion on the part of the student teachers; one concern which was most evident was the fear that the students would not respect the novice teachers. Another concern was what role they should display since they were not yet teachers. During student teaching it was difficult for the novice teachers to keep up with their fieldnotes; the notes during their apprenticeship period were fuller and more dimensional. Williams (1992) concluded that this alternative approach to teacher preparation can help student teachers and cooperating teachers. Student teachers become more flexible and willing to change. Cooperating teachers are given a wealth of information about the student teaching qualities of the novice teachers. This approach might be used to develop interpretive inquiry skills that would be more useful to the school setting.

Teacher candidates were the subjects of a study by Wright and Kasten (1992). The authors based their study on four sequential stages of reflection: Describing, Informing, Confronting, and Reconstructing. The goal of the research was to help teacher candidates gain new ways to reflect, thereby increasing insight and broadening their repertoire of responses. The teacher candidates reflected in journals as a means of examining their own teaching. Later, teacher candidates engaged in reflection on action research with their own students. One area of interest was the teacher candidates reflection on their own teaching styles and their rating of themselves as either facilitative or directive. Another area of consideration was a reflection on thinking styles: legislative, executive, or judicial. The teacher candidates were also asked to reflect on highlights and concerns of the week. Finally, they were asked to reflect on parenting styles. The conclusions of this study included the recognition of sensitivity toward reflection processes and an awareness of the value of metacognition in the student teaching environment.

Kelsay's (1989) qualitative study of reflective teaching explored the quality of reflection utilized by 3 expert teachers. "The phenomenon of

reflection in teaching was defined as thinking about teaching or reflection-on-action and as thinking while teaching or reflection-in-action" (abstract). She found that reflection plays an important role in teaching. It helps with problem solving, integration of value beliefs, theoretical knowledge, craft knowledge and contextual situations. The implications of Kelsay's (1992) research included the need for further investigation of how teachers think and how they develop professional knowledge.

Research studies have uncovered a wealth of information about reflection and its value to preservice teachers, inservice teachers, teacher educators, cooperating teachers, and supervising teachers. Information obtained from qualitative and quantitative studies concerning reflection validate the need for additional data.

Data Collection/Sample

Data obtained for this study were contained in the journals kept by 3 student teachers who completed their teacher education programs in the Spring Semester of 1993. Each of the journals differed according to the personalities of the recorders, their interests, and their interpretations of the assignment to keep a reflective journal during their practice teaching experiences. No specific length was assigned to any journal

entry, but the students were asked to write each day that they spent in the classroom. Students A and B were to record reflectively; however, Student C was asked to record for specific reflections on teaching methods, self-as-teacher, discipline, school-wide policies, and the relationship of teacher preparatory coursework with actual practice. The 3 student teachers were white. Their ages were 30 plus. Their placements were all in elementary schools; Student A and Student B were placed in first grade,and Student C was placed in second grade. The subjects were not assigned to the same school, but two were assigned to schools in the same district.

Procedure/Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the journal of a student who was given specific areas for reflective thinking and the journals of 2 students who were told to keep reflective journals but were given no specific areas to consider. The research question was framed in this way: "Does a student teacher who reflects on experiences in practice teaching appear to express more success than student teachers who practice no (directed) reflective thinking?" The journals were kept over a 12 week period; they were turned in at the end of the practice

teaching seminar. The journals were read initially for references to thinking and feeling about any issues; they were then read for the specific areas of concern. The 3 students provided insight on curriculum, school-wide policy issues, classroom theories and instruction, staff development, as well as value concerns.

Student A began her student teaching experiences at an elementary school which has been designated a Total Chapter 1 school with a field trip involving herself, her cooperating teacher, other teachers, and a group of 75 first graders. Her initial response was to blame this situation for the "many" discipline problems encountered on her first day. The next day's activities were much smoother and produced the reflection that "routine is important to this age child." On January 19, 1993, Student A felt that constant interruptions caused by the cooperating teacher's leaving the classroom to fulfill the duties of the principal who was absent "had taken a toll on classroom management." On the next day, Student A discovered an eternal truth from teaching: "I had no idea teachers had so much paperwork!" She further reflected that college classwork had not prepared her group "for the practical, everyday housekeeping skills needed to set up a classroom!" This

reflection was based on the requisite skills of keeping an attendance register. She also reflected on the fact that "I have never been taught how to correctly use a teacher's manual."

Student A was stunned by the students' behavior and the ineffectuality of the classroom discipline plan for certain students with extreme behavior problems. When Student A was required to teach her cooperating teacher's class because Mrs. G. was ill, she discovered the value of well-written lesson plans and recorded a feeling of success based on her ability to follow those plans. On another occasion when Mrs. G. was out of town, Student A recorded this reflection: "Sometimes, I think the children behave better when I am by myself. I think they react better to only one authority figure in the room. We had a good day." Student A also reflected on the value of staff development presentations which offer practical ideas for classroom use and the futility of staff development activities that do not offer any real solutions to actual classroom practice. After several days of practice teaching, Student A disclosed this remark, "Sometimes I feel like I am talking to myself when I'm teaching." Emergency procedures prompted Student A to discover that no one apparently ever explains the drills and locations to a practice

teacher, but that is a necessary question for any practice teacher to ask. After attending a PTA meeting at her school, Student A lamented, "I understand now why teachers feel that they lack parental support." She did not reflect on why parents fail to attend such meetings. Later, she was surprised to have 17 parents attend conferences to talk about student evaluations. One of Student A's children, M. M. had many ailments and whined often; Student A decided to play down her own reactions to the child's whining to see if it would decrease. She did not record whether this approach was successful. Student A's experiences with actual teaching produced this response: "Looking back on this 'experience,' I believe I should have selected a different lesson . . . This particular group of children cannot work together." With regard to the specific area of method, Student A stated, "After a couple of weeks of teaching reading groups, I have only one thought--I hate reading groups! There has got to be a better way to teach reading. This method is boring for the kids as well as for me! I would like to use a more relaxed, practical method for teaching reading. I dread reading groups more every day." With regard to discipline, Student A had most difficulty with B. who exploded in outbursts of temper; her remarks were: "I spend

most of my day trying to deal with him. This is so unfair to the other students. His behavior sets the tone for the day. He disrupts the entire classroom. I don't have the answers for this situation. I don't think anyone else does either." On another occasion Student A recorded her response to B's outbursts: "I feel totally unprepared to handle his severe behavior. I do not feel that I have had enough training to know how to handle his behavior. Student A found it extremely difficult to motivate the class of "typical" students and reflected on the possibility of inadequacy with the particular grade level. This questioning was further expanded later with the comment: "I wonder if anything I taught today will be remembered." After two months of practice teaching Student A was ready for Spring break: "Thank goodness. I am so tired. I did not realized how time-consuming and demanding teaching can be."

Student B completed her practice teaching with a first grade class at a large, rural elementary school. Her first response to the school was, "I'm overwhelmed by the size of the school—1700 students. I'm amazed at how well it seems to run." Student B reflected more on the skills and procedures demonstrated by her cooperating teacher; she appeared to have much confidence in the quality of instruction in the classroom and

the disciplinary techniques demonstrated by Mrs. L., despite the gossip she had heard that Mrs. L. did not want a practice teacher to supervise. Student B also spent time reflecting on students and their personal lives. One comment about E.'s step-sister who "runs the roads" was, "What happened to the 'age of innocence'?"

Student B was more concerned with the affective domain of the students in her classroom; she frequently commented on the problems experienced by students, both at home and in the school situation. Her comment was, "I'm learning a lot about how to deal with troubled children." To further identify Student B's reflections concerning this, a later entry in her journal stated, "I wish I could get some of them to get along better with their peers. Some of them are always so unhappy and blaming each other for things that happen. They need to improve their self-esteem." Even later in her journal, she commented, "I hope that I can foster that caring atmosphere in my classroom instead of the bickering and complaining." With regard to teaching methodology, Student B learned that she could not assume anything—"These children need everything explained to them step by step." When Mrs. L. was required to attend a meeting, Student B commented in a similar way to

Student A, "I seem more relaxed and in control when I have them by myself." Student B chose to identify one child (J.) for extensive reflection about his behavior, successes and failures. With regard to parental involvement, Student B expressed the same sentiments as Student A, "One thought that kept popping up in our conversations (at a staff development meeting with several other first grade teachers) was the lack of concern of some parents. Schools are a reflection of society and society has lots of problems." Student B reflected on the possiblity of disliking children, but then she worried about not meeting all their needs. She further reflected on the fact that children need such basics as food every day so that they will be able to learn. As with Student A, Student B felt that too much turmoil affected discipline: "They need a constant routine." When there is too much confusion, children are not able to enjoy activities. When confronted with the tasks of teaching, Student B stated, "There is not enough time to accomplish everything that needs to be done when there is such a wide range of abilities. I wonder if whole language would be better than four reading groups. I'm anxious to observe whole language classrooms to see if those children learn the necessary skills." With regard to school-wide policies, Student B stated,

". . .the teacher should be provided with professional assistance in dealing with these (mainstreamed) children. If teachers are going to be expected to deal with these children—and there will be many of them—then the system must provide them with the assistance to deal with them!!" Student B closed her journal with a positive note, "I feel that this student teaching experience has prepared me for the real world of teaching."

Student C practice taught in an affluent elementary school setting with second grade. Student C was instructed to apply reflective inquiry to specific situations during her student teaching experiences. Her reflections on self-as-teacher and her cooperating teacher began her journal. She stated: "I usually don't realize how stressed I am until I get home." She expressed her philosophy in this reflection: "I chose to teach because I believe in children and I believe I can make a difference. . . I wonder if there are enough me's, Rosie's and Beth's, etc. — to counterbalance the teachers out there who have stopped caring. I know they all—or most—at one time must have felt as I do. But what happened? I pray to God that I never lose my idealism, optimism, and enthusiasm for children and learning." Other reflections on teaching and

methods follow:

1. "It seems like I'm in training and it's just a matter of time before I get into condition."
2. "I know why there are more women than men in this profession. Women have more stamina and endurance when it comes to jobs that involve endless guilt and frustration."
3. "I have to work on consistency--something that's always been one of my short-comings."
4. "Yeah--sure! How is all that wonderful practical stuff we've learned for the last 2 years supposed to relate to what I'm doing now? I don't see how a human being is supposed to squeeze all these objectives into so little teaching time. It seems like when you really hit on something the kids are curious about and want to know about you have to steer them back to the objective to be covered."
5. "I really liked having things to myself (Mrs. McL. was out sick.). I feel more in control when it's just me. Of course, I don't have anyone to ask things or be there to straighten

things out, but I don't feel that

I'm following someone else's routine."

6. "I don't want to change things much because this isn't my class and Mrs. McL. has them set in the routine very well."
7. "We did an art activity today. I had everything prepared and planned out step-by-step. It makes a huge difference."
8. "Mrs. McL. had her evaluation today. She was nervous. It seems hard to believe that such a good teacher can still get nervous over being evaluated. But I certainly understand it."
9. "I spent several hours this weekend planning for this week—trying to fit everything in; trying to cover all the objectives, etc.. Then, I find out we've got play practice every day; plus a dental program, a tornado safety program, a Valentine's party, and we have to plant bulbs." Further reflection on this comment indicated that Student C felt that time for teaching was not really a priority and that there was a flawed sense of what were appropriate expectations for teachers."

10. "I really like doing things on my own. Of course, I don't have someone there to remind me of things. I can't wait to get my own classroom."
11. "I think to be a teacher you have to be part juggler."
12. "Mrs. McL. is still out. It's been a very educational week."
13. "I was going exactly by what it said in the Teacher's Resource book. But Mrs. McL. came over and said, 'I don't do it like that.' O.K. I want them to do well and maybe her way is better. At least that's what they're used to."
14. "I can't believe that after 2 years of learning all this 'teaching stuff', I'm finally here—the moment of truth. It's so scary. Maybe I won't do well. I think my unit looks good on paper, but how is it going to look in the real classroom? I guess we'll find out soon."
15. "As if tomorrow isn't nerve-racking enough, L.B. is coming to take pictures for the paper. I'll probably have huge bags under my eyes from not sleeping! I don't think I ever wrote about that—getting Outstanding Graduate! I'm really

honored and flattered, but I can't believe it! I really haven't told anybody from school. I don't want to act—you know—conceited. It can really make things harder—Now I feel like I have to live up to the honor—and really be outstanding! What if I don't?"

16. "I didn't get all 5's (on her Mississippi Teacher Evaluation Instrument assessment by her college supervisor), but I'm really not sure a student teacher should get all 5's (the highest rating). I know my lesson wasn't perfect. I know I need some input and suggestions. And, of course, Mrs. W. is so . . . tactful! All in all, I'm pretty satisfied with my evaluation and mostly just glad it's over."

17. "I observed at School X today--2nd and 4th grade classes. People who teach at places like that are truly saints. . .I know I'm supposed to be prepared for anything, but I honestly do not think I could handle that teaching job. Students with no respect for you or themselves--total defiance. How do you teach someone who doesn't want to learn?"

Student C's reflections about discipline centered around a handful of students and few instances of disobedience. Her expectations of student behavior was different from actual experience. She began her student teaching with duty in the school's auditorium. She remarked, "What I encountered was not at all what I expected. I expected groups of children sitting around talking and joking. What I was confronted with when I entered was complete quiet and students coming in and filling up rows in perfect order. I thought: 'Poor little soldiers. Conform, conform, conform.' But at the same time I understood why the order was necessary. When that many students are together in one room, there must be a routine and expectations. Student C discussed her feelings with her cooperating teacher in order to gain insight into the subject. One of Student C's pupils showed evidence of child abuse; he admitted to the school principal that he had been spanked, and the bruise was evident on his back. He was one of the discipline problems in the classroom. Student C also determined that he begged food from other pupils and never had a snack for the morning break; he told her that he did not eat breakfast at home. Student C also commented on several students who were required to remain for after-school detention.

Another area which Student C reflected upon was classroom control; she said, "I really thought I would have a much higher tolerance for the noise level in a clasroom. Right now, I'm not sure if it's because I feel like--I know I have to prove I can control these children or if I really am going to have to have things more structured than I first thought. The one thing that keeps slapping me in the face is, 'This is not my class. I'll only teach them for a few short weeks. I need to follow Mrs. McL.'s lead'." On one especially awful day, Student C commented: "I have never seen these children in such a disruptive and volatile mood. I think the fact that their regular routine has been completely disrupted is a factor, along with the fact they're testing their boundaries with me." Further comment by Student C was, "At first I worried about them taking me seriously, but they've tested my boundaries and I've had to write a few notes to parents; now they accept me as a 'real teacher.'"

During her supervising teacher's evaluation, Student C was advised to work on keeping all the children on task; however, she stated that she was trying to apply teaching methods which suggested ignoring inappropriate behavior. Student C did not apply reflective inquiry on this particular situation. Standardized testing created the following reflection,

"When we were through with today's testing, the kids were argumentative toward each other for the rest of the day. They are sick of testing and school in general, just like I am." Student C reported several instances of concern with the way that preparator coursework could be incorporated into classroom activities. She expressed some doubts about how it was all coming together into a pattern that could be useful to her as a career teacher. She was trying to apply all that she had learned at once and considered it to be very difficult.

Student C's reflections on school-wide policies indicated a low tolerance for lost time. She also questioned whether the principal would actually look at every student's report card over the weekend. With regard to staff development, Student C evinced the usual mixture of joy and discouragement experienced by the other student teachers. She enjoyed certain presentations and failed to find anything of value in others. "Staff development has yet to impress me!" was one of her comments. With regard to the Grandparents program which students practiced for with such intensity, Student C made these comments, "All the work and practice really paid off. I guess it was really worth it! These parents and grandparents and community members are really the

foundation of the school system. It is a MUST that we as educators stay in contact with the community. Hopefully, when they see how much effort teachers put into teaching their children, they will be more supportive of the school system. Of course, I'm not real sure that's how it works." Another aspect of the school-wide program appeared in reflection; Student C did not feel that the standardized testing was an effective way to evaluate the students, and she also learned that some of the regular teachers were dismayed at the discrepancy between teaching methods and testing methods.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Examination of the contents of the student teachers' journals revealed strong similarities despite the fact that they had received different instructions. The instructional coursework of the teacher education program provided an existing framework of reflective inquiry which was evident in all 3 journals; also, the students remained in the program for four semesters, frequently in the same classes and with the same instructors. Student C received additional instruction on reflective inquiry, but there was little evidence that this information increased her depth or breadth of reflection. She did report a greater sense of success

than the other 2 student teachers reported.

The 3 journals all addressed the specific areas of interest to varying degrees: methods of teaching, discipline, self-as-teacher, school-wide policies, and the relationship between preparatory coursework and classroom instruction. Unfortunately, none of the 3 students was able to give sufficient time to her journal to provide highest quality material. Many of the journal entries were merely a recounting of daily events. The specific students who were profiled from their classes were interesting, and the practice teachers found their children's lives to be problematic. This opportunity to observe the students from an action point of view created an awareness of the importance of developing a sense of self esteem in every student and the importance of providing a stable environment in the classroom. Extraneous variables were obvious in the records found in the journals; there was never enough time to get everything done; there were families and their homes to be considered; there were requirements for college classwork to be met; and there were non-teaching activities at the school sites. All of this contributed to the lack of depth found in the journals of the 3 students.

All of the student teachers expressed similar concerns about

methodology and the application of knowledge gained in teacher education coursework to classroom situations. The general commentary centered on the fact that theoretical coursework did not prepare them for the reality of record keeping and the classroom organization required. Furthermore, the student teachers lacked familarity with such everyday things as Teacher Resource Books and Teacher's Editions of textbooks. The particular area of concern for reading was the use of basal readers and reading groups. The student teachers' educational coursework contained a number of opportunities to examine and discuss the whole language approach to the teaching of reading and language arts. It was possible that a bias was created in their thought patterns by the classes they took, the lesson presentations they observed, and the textbooks selected for their classes. Student B found that one cannot assume readiness for any task. Also, she indicated that children needed extensive explanations in order to complete tasks; she did not expect this. Recent changes in the students' educational program deemphasized the educational coursework and changed the framework of the Core Curriculum. The changes stressed the arts and sciences courses necessary to provide content-related knowledge. It was possible

that this left a gap in the student teachers' understanding of how and when students can be expected to begin to work independently. Since the student teachers were all in first and second grade classrooms, their feeling that students could work more independently and without extensive explanations seemed unrealistic.

Some comments on discipline surfaced as a distinct pattern throughout each of the 3 journals. The commentary about discipline matters matched the normal patterns of interaction in a class--the bad days and the good days. On good days, the student teachers expressed confidence with their abilities to handle students appropriately, control behavior, and promote a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. On the bad days, each wondered how to handle the unbelievably complex issues of students' lives and their interrelationships. None of the students reflected sufficiently on the type of discipline plan exhibited in the classroom; therefore, it was not possible to determine what specific plan of action existed or was being implemented. Student C wrote about sending notes home to parents. Student B discussed whether J. was on a green discipline card or not. Student A discussed one student who exhibited outbursts; B. was always sent home when he

got out of control. Insufficient information was found in the journals to determine fully what the students thought about this area of concern.

The students comments on school-wide policies were generally negative and critical. This was especially true of some of the staff development activities which did not meet specific needs and were not useful for actual classroom situations. Students had both negative and positive comments to make about parental involvement. Student C was the most positive of the 3. She understood the value of having programs and other events which brought parents, grandparents, and community citizens into the schools to observe. She did question whether it would serve the purpose intended. Students A and B both felt that parents were not responsible enough for the welfare and learning of their students. Time-on-task was another area of concern for school-wide policies. Student C did not feel that many of the activities planned for the children were educational enough to warrant missing classroom learning situations. The other student teachers mentioned such things as tornado drills, field days, and other activities that were poorly executed, despite careful planning.

Student C did spend more time reflecting on self-as-teacher. She

was selected the Outstanding Graduate of her class at MSU-Meridian and spent some intense reflection on herself and her personal worth and quality as a teacher. She was pleased to receive the honor, but she was hesitant to talk about it with her classmates. She indicated that she was not sure she could live up to this commendation. She referred to the high quality of her lesson plans and her extensive efforts to prepare them well. She also reflected on the fact that no matter how well one plans, things do not always work as planned. In her evaluation, Student C did not receive the highest ratings on all of the 16 indicators of the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instrument used to rate practice teachers and in-service teachers. She reflected that she did not believe that student teachers should receive the highest ratings. She expressed doubt that anyone could teach well under circumstances in which students did not wish to learn at all and sympathized with those teachers who teach under those conditions. Her reflection on this was that she did not believe she could do it despite all her work and preparation. From her reflective inquiry, it appeared that Student C approached her student teaching experiences with a strong sense of reality, despite her claim to be an idealist, an optimist, and an enthusiastic person. Student

C felt sure of herself and expressed a sense of success and relief that her education was completed and her career beginning.

The information found in the journals of these 3 student teachers indicated that the educational coursework provided a strong foundation in the necessary skills for teaching. None of the students expressed any dissatisfaction with their educational program, and all seemed to believe that they were ready to take their places in classrooms. Reflective inquiry served a purpose in their experiences, but future student teachers should be more thoroughly taught observational skills and the necessity of thinking critically about what is observed. Furthermore, all students should be encouraged to become teacher researchers, willing to expend the extra effort to learn about students, teaching, and self.

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